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News Release

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Siren to be tested in Spring Valley

Baltimore – On June 16 at noon, a siren will be tested in the Spring Valley neighborhood of Washington, D.C., by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District. The siren will serve as emergency notification during upcoming work at Lot 18 on the southeastern edge of the American University campus and adjacent to houses on Rockwood Parkway. The work at Lot 18 is part of the Corps' investigation and cleanup of buried ordnance, explosive waste and hazardous substances that may still exist as a result of past military activities in the Spring Valley neighborhood.

In the unlikely event that, during the planned dig at Lot 18, a chemical release occurs and escapes the engineering controls, the siren will sound to let people in the immediate area know they should shelter-in-place. **The residents and university staff who are potentially affected have been notified and taught shelter-in-place techniques. Others need take no action unless directed by fire or police officials.**

The test will begin with a wail sound, which is the emergency notification, followed by a steady tone, which is the all-clear notification. This test will last about one minute. It is being conducted to ensure that the siren equipment is in working order. The siren will be re-tested on the first Friday of the month at noon.

The dig is scheduled to resume June 21 and will be carried out Mondays-Thursdays.

In 2003, a small quantity of diluted lewisite, a WWI chemical warfare agent, was recovered during excavation at Lot 18, leading to the conclusion that there is a possibility of finding more agent at that location. The project team prepared work and safety plans with review, guidance and approval from the Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville, Ala.; the U.S. Army Technical Escort Unit, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.; the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, Edgewood, Md.; the Environmental Protection Agency; the D.C. Department of Health; American University; and the Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board.

The plans call for extensive safety precautions to protect workers and those who live and work near Lot 18. These include an airtight engineering control structure, redundant chemical filtration systems and air monitoring capabilities.

[Media note: a media tour is planned for June 18 at 10 a.m. at Lot 18. A description of the project and the safety precautions along with a visit inside the engineering control structure will be offered. Watch for the media advisory to be issued June 16.]